

Laurisse Sulty

# “We were in Wuhan when the virus started”

The pandemic hasn't kept the French dancer from touring the world

I grew up in a small town near Paris and when I was young, I always wanted to leave, to discover the world. Now, at 25, I feel lucky I was able to grow up in a small community, where everyone knows each other.

My family loves to travel and so, from an early age, they took me to different countries in Europe. They understood the importance of discovering other cultures and learning other languages, so when I started secondary school, they would send me to a host family in England for my holidays to learn the language.

I've been dancing since I was five years old, but never anticipated I would become a dancer. What happened



Dancer Laurisse Sulty at Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, Russia, and at the Great Wall of China (left). Below: *The Little Prince* on stage. Inset: Las Vegas, US, now Laurisse's home.

was, after graduating high school, I missed the dates to sign up for college and randomly found a prospectus for a professional dance school in Paris, so decided to try it. We studied all types of dance, and also had classes in musicals, singing and comedy – they really tried to make you a whole artist. It was while performing as a back-up dancer on *France's Got Talent* that I discovered, “Wow, this is really what I want to do.”

Before I graduated, I got a job with Cirque du Soleil in *Mystère* in Las Vegas. When you decide to become a dancer, you never think it will take you so far away from home. I was 20 years old, working as a dancer, able to pay my rent and buy a car – I was really proud of myself. Las Vegas is such a big city with so many shows – I was so happy to be among so much talent from around the world and able to learn from them. It really was amazing.

I did this for a year and a half, and the day I was packing to move back to Europe, I met my husband, a doctor. We did a long-distance relationship for a time before getting married, and now I live with him, our cat and dog in Vegas.



I love that dance can take you to so many different places and allow you to do so many different things – I did a Bollywood film in Malta and went back to Paris to do the video game *Just Dance*. While there, I decided to go back to my old dance school to take some classes. The creators of *The Little Prince* stage show, Anne Tournié and Chris Mouron, were there looking for new talent. So I did the casting and a few weeks later they offered me the role of The Rose in the show. It's a really emotional show, based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's book. The character was quite intense for me to work on, because, as a dancer, it's hard to show vulnerability.

I have been looking forward to seeing Sydney, because I've never been to Australia before. I didn't

come previously because I got stuck in the United States with the pandemic. After that, we're going to Broadway, which is fantastic. Between Australia and New York, we'll have a month off, so I'll visit my family and hopefully go away with my husband. There are so many places I'd like to see – I recently went to Tulum in Mexico, which was somewhere I really enjoyed. But I'd love to go to Africa – to Tanzania and the Victoria Falls.

My favourite place I've been on tour was China, where I spent six months with the musical *Notre-Dame de Paris*. I really enjoyed the country – it was so different from anywhere I'd been. We went to Shanghai and Beijing and we were in Wuhan when the virus started.

At that time, nobody knew what it was, but slowly everyone started wearing masks in the audience and we were like, “Okay, something is going on.” I got sick for a few days – I don't know if it was Covid, but thankfully the tour ended about a week later, so we got home and then everything shut down.

Now when we tour, we just stay in a bubble. It's hard, because I can't see friends or some family, because I just need to make sure I can leave.

As to the future, I just take everything as it comes. After doing Cirque du Soleil, touring China, Australia and Broadway, anything is welcome.

*The stage production of The Little Prince is at Sydney Coliseum Theatre until January 23. [ticketek.com.au](https://www.ticketek.com.au)*

